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ABSTRACT

Predicated on a belief that assessment and evaluation should be vital, planned aspects of the curriculum, this booklet describes classroom-based assessment that serves to inform teachers, students, and parents of the learner's growth as well as to suggest next-step instructional goals. Procedures developed by classroom teachers which integrate assessment within the instructional process include a photo album project, writing journals/folders, reading logs, and anecdotal records. The approach in the booklet was developed around beliefs that assessment and evaluation are most valuable when they are: (1) reflective of what is known about language and learning; (2) centered in the classroom; (3) compatible with curricular and instructional goals; (4) qualitative as well as quantitative; (5) multidimensional and leading to a profile of growth and progress over time; (6) focused on and developed alongside the child, parent, and teacher; and (7) informative in guiding decisions for next-step instruction. The booklet presents assessment checklists as a means of demonstrating the growth of the readers and writers in their classrooms. Fifteen references, six additional resources, and five resources for checklists are attached. (RS)

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LITERACY IMPROVEMENT SERIES
FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS

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Celebrating Growth Over Time: Classroom-Based Assessment in Language Arts

Nancy J. Johnson

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As a child, I grew up in a family with a tradition for celebrating growth. Every year, Dad Johnson would march his three young daughters downstairs into our unfinished basement. Then one at a time, we'd back our little bodies up against the door casing while Dad gently placed a book or a ruler on our head. Wherever it touched the wall he'd lightly pencil the date and our initials and then...we'd stand back and celebrate our growth since last time. We probably also added some typical sisterly comparisons, but what I most remember about this tradition rests with the sheer joy of seeing how much we'd grown. We didn't tug on Dad's belt buckle and ask, "Daddy, Daddy, how've I grown?" We didn't wait for Dad to calculate median, mode, or standard deviation. We didn t defer the how've-I-grown decision to an outsider or to someone bigger and older. We knew. The data was right in front of us and we were included in the review of it. We knew how much we'd grown and we immediately set about anticipating, even planning for, the next measurement.

I hadn't made much connection to that childhood measurement tradition until a few years ago. With the resurgence of studies and professional literature on authentic assessment, and a widespread embracing of a whole language philosophy, popular topics have emerged. Currently, issues related to assessment and evaluation are especially prominent. Articles on whole language assessment and portfolios can be found in professional journals as well as in popular parenting magazines. Books and monographs on literacy assessment are being published in record numbers. Terms like alternative assessment, authentic assessment, and performance-based assessment have become a delight for many classroom teachers and a nightmare for many school district assessment directors.

What's driving this intense desire to develop profiles of learning, to abandon time-honored traditional report cards and grades, and to invite children to show us what they know as well as what they're ready to learn? I believe that teachers desire to do what my Dad did naturally with his daughters many years ago...celebrate each child's growth over time by using clear indicators that growth is occurring.

A celebratory stance toward assessment may always have been there for some teachers. However, in the past few years a growing number of teachers, students, and parents have raised critical voices towards the outdated, over-used, and even abused instru-

ments of assessment adopted by schools and districts nationwide. We've been faced with a dilemma created by evaluation systems and materials that don't always match or document what's being taught or, more importantly, what's being learned.

Many researchers have concluded that assessment has not kept pace with current advances in language learning theory, research, or practice, citing, for example, reading tests' focus on discrete skills in contrast to current instruction's concern with strategies (Valencia & Pearson, 1987; Cambourne & Turbill, 1990; Wiggins, 1989; Shepard, 1989). They have also raised the issue of overreliance on standardized test scores and other formal testing programs such as basal unit tests and report card data as not adequately providing an accurate picture of student growth and achievement.

Current literacy learning theory honors the interrelatedness of the language arts, acknowledges the development of literacy as an ongoing process, and honors each learner's unique developmental process of actively constructing meaning. Researchers, teachers, learners, and parents are finding that traditional assessment and evaluation systems no longer make sense. Yet many, perhaps most, schools continue to use evaluation reporting systems that do not serve as indicators of the instruction being evaluated. And many of these schools and districts will continue to use these systems, even though all of these systems are changeable. Change in education occurs slowly. To accomplish it, teachers need support and some growth-over-time pieces from the classroom to supplement and complement those evaluation and assessment systems that fail to reveal what learners know and can do as readers and writers. It's past time to make connections between our philosophy of learning and teaching and the ways we assess and evaluate learners.

While this paper's focus is on classroom-based assessment, it is imperative that this is not separated from evaluation. Evaluation judgments grow naturally out of assessment evidence. To create this fit, we need to establish benchmarks or standards against which performance is measured, standards which reflect our understandings about reading and writing as language processes. These may be organized as a continuum of behaviors similar to those found in the *Language Arts Portfolio Handbook for the Primary Grades* (1992) and *Supporting Learning: Understanding and Assessing the Progress of Children in the Primary Grades* (1992) or presented as reading and writing "bands" similar to those documented in the *Literacy Profiles Handbook* (1990). They may also be exam-

ined through reference sets that include descriptions of developmental stages with samples of student work at different levels as the Ministry of Education in British Columbia has developed in two documents, published together as *Evaluating Writing Across Curriculum* (1992). We serve ourselves and our students well when we are knowledgeable about language, learning and literacy. The more we understand, the more each piece of assessment information we examine will inform us (Cambourne, 1988).

This paper describes classroom-based assessment that serves to inform teachers, students, and parents of the learner's growth as well as to suggest next-step instructional goals. This focus is predicated on a belief that assessment and evaluation should be vital, planned aspects of the curriculum and that learners and their parents should be involved with the teacher in developing an understanding of the learner's progress. The approach is also developed around beliefs that assessment and evaluation are most valuable when they are:

- Reflective of what is known about language and learning
- Centered in the classroom
- Compatible with curricular and instructional goals
- Qualitative as well as quantitative
- Multidimensional and leading to a profile of growth and progress over time
- Focused on and developed alongside the primary stakeholders (child, teacher, parent)
- Informative in guiding decisions for next-step instruction

Assessment Informed by and Not Separated from Curriculum

One of the biggest "yes but" concerns raised by teachers interested in creating more authentic assessment measures is the question, "When do I find the time?" Given a curriculum that is being revised annually (if not more often) by new programs, new textbooks, and new issues that schools feel pressured to address, it's no wonder a new view of assessment is often looked at as some-

thing else to add to an already crowded school day. The examples shared in this paper do not demand more time from teachers during or beyond the school day. What they do demand is a new look at the decisions teachers make within the school day. Many teachers are finding that planning appropriate instruction, both daily and long range, becomes much easier when assessment is an integral part of the curriculum. This in-process assessment as well as the evaluation of products of learning can, and does, inform teachers of what learners know, can do, and may be ready to learn. Often the best assessments are a natural outgrowth of a learning engagement and are considered part of a teaching cycle that weaves planning and teaching with evaluating (Dalrymple, 1989). The examples in the next sections have been selected to do exactly that—demonstrate ways to integrate assessment within the instructional process.

Getting Ready/Getting Started

The remainder of this booklet includes assessment checklists, profiles, and procedures developed by classroom teachers as a means of demonstrating the growth of the readers and writers in their classrooms. Before any of these are considered for use, it is imperative that teachers first spend time focusing on their *goals* for readers and writers and then consider the various assessment procedures available to determine how learners meet those goals. I also urge teachers to *adapt* the ideas and examples in this booklet and from other sources in ways that address their goals and the needs of their students and their school systems.

Developing an accurate and complete picture of a student's progress, strengths, and needs requires a variety of measures. We all know that the accumulation and examination of process and product assessments provides a more accurate, sensitive, and valid picture of a learner than do one-shot, formal, impersonal, and de-contextualized measures. One means of deciding which measures to utilize is through a two-question framework (Routman, 1991) that asks, "What do I want to know?" and "How am I going to find it out?" An example of such a framework, shown in the table at right, was developed by Louise Beard, a third grade teacher, during her second year of teaching.

Realizing the formidable task of using each and every measure-

WHAT DO I WANT TO KNOW?	HOW AM I GOING TO FIND OUT?
Oral reading	Tape recording/running records Reading conferences Shared reading Paired reading
Spelling/conventions of written language	Have-A-Go sheets and pretests Journal writing Writing conferences Proofreading exercises Dictation Projects and reports
Reading comprehension	Reading conferences/retellings Summary statements for read alouds Literature response logs Contributions in literature discussion groups Written tests Projects and reports
Reading/writing attitudes	Reading logs Oral interview Written inventories Journal writing Reading/writing conferences
How student views self as reader/writer	Self-evaluations Rubrics Report cards

ment tool in this framework, Louise wisely selected a few to begin with, and then focused her framework into a three-year plan. The importance of giving ourselves permission to select manageable tools to adapt can't be overstated. Had Louise felt the need to attempt each and every measurement tool under her "How am I going to find out?" column, she would surely have been overwhelmed and may even have missed the many joyful discoveries that occurred as she took risks, tried out new procedures, observed

students, recorded information, and grew in her own abilities as a learner-centered, classroom-based evaluator.

Instructional Activities that Naturally Provide Assessment Information

Photo Album Project

Kindergarten teacher Joan Donaldson involves her students in an individualized year-long project called the "Photo Album Project." This project serves as a means of recording the child's kindergarten year in photos and in writing, and provides a ready-made, living record of the children's growth as writers. Each child secures a three-ring notebook (obtained through donations, at minimal cost from garage sales and business office supply sales, or purchased from PTA monies or educational grants). Joan takes photos of the children on a regular basis from the first day of school throughout the year. All photos are developed into double prints. Classroom visitors are invited to bring along a camera, take photos, and develop the film as a gift to the class. By October, Joan has established quite a collection of photographs. At that time she introduces the Photo Album Project to the children as a station activity. On the days when a group rotates through the photo album station, the children scan the photos on display in a pocket chart. When they locate a photo they'd like for their album, they remove it from the pocket, take it to the writing table, select either a lined or unlined 3x5 piece of paper and write a label for the photo they've selected. Each written photo caption must include the current date. Children desiring to have their writing "translated" into book print make that request to a teacher or parent helper. The photo and written label are then glued onto a 9x11 piece of paper and placed in the child's photo album. As children work through the photo album station throughout the year, their album expands in volume and their written labels grow as a demonstration of their writing skill and competence. Photo captions on the facing page illustrate the growth in one child's writing ability just from December to February.

The Photo Album Project shows an emerging writer's growing ability to use writing in logical, sensible ways that include how much each child knows about individual letters and sounds, about

iMPAeNOS

DeSeMbeR 6
I am playing in the
home center.

STeVeN
PLaYiNG iN THe
PLeDC
FeBruary 6
Steven is doing the play dough.

spacing between words, about picture/word correspondence, about capitals and punctuation. This project also serves as a natural measure of the child's growth and changes over one school year...in scribbles, pictures, and words! It's easy to note a child's strengths as well as areas of needed instruction from viewing the photo album pages, especially when a teacher has in mind and can articulate benchmarks for stages of development. No separate test is necessary.

Writing Journals/Folders

A writing journal and/or a writing folder is another literacy engagement with built-in assessment which demands no additional time. The Photo Album Project is a modification of a writing journal. Journals and writing folders, when all writing is dated and collected over time, serve as natural storehouses of answers to the questions, "What does the writer know? What can this writer do?" and "How has this writer grown or changed over time?" For example, in one first grader's writing journal (see facing page) there's a natural progression from scribble to letter formation to words, the inclusion of spaces between words, and adherence to capital letters and punctuation.

Given the same twenty minutes of journal writing time daily, this student made the decision in January to eliminate drawing a picture first because, "Then there's not enough time for writing." What does this writer know and what can she do independently in October? What does she know and do in November? In December? In April? The answers lie within the scribbles, drawings and writings found in her journal.

Reading Logs

A goal of many teachers is that students read voraciously, developing their own interests and passions as strategic, independent readers. Evaluating whether this goal is realized demands a different tool than a traditional paper-pencil test. What it doesn't necessitate is an additional evaluation or additional record keeping by the teacher. When students are invited to keep a record of all the books they read over the course of the year, *they* begin to collect the evidence needed to paint a picture of themselves as independent readers.

Reading Logs or Reading Records are most effective when

they're uncomplicated and don't demand mini-book-report information from the reader. The most informative logs we've found for younger children are those that ask the reader to list the book title and rating (child's personal rating of the book—usually on a 1-5 scale). Older readers often find additional information useful in developing their sense of preferences as a reader. For example, Reading Logs for older readers often include columns requesting author's name, book or genre type (e.g. mystery, series book, poetry), date started and date finished, and number of pages read. Always included, regardless of age level, is a value line or rating scale. Readers, even young readers, like to evaluate a book's worth. What better and more natural way to present self-evaluation as something feasible?

Two different Reading Logs are shown on the following pages. The first, developed by a first grade teacher, is modified by a student who can't quite fit book title and author on one line.

Student Record Form

Name _____

Date	Title	AUTHOR	RATE
3/28	1. The Snail Spell		two
3/28	2. Cloudy With A Chance Of Meatba		
3/28	3. Cap for Lee		
4/1	4. The night before Christmas		
4/1	5. Cloudy with a chance of meatb		two
4/1	6. A WEEKEND	four	
4/1	7. The very hungry caterpillar		25
4/11	8. Henny / Penny	H	
4/19	9. Bears Expenses	Keer	
4/1	10. Kite fly fish		
	11.		
	12.		
	13.		
	14.		
	15.		
	16.		
	17.		
	18.		
	19.		
	20.		
	21.		
	22.		
	23		

RATING SCALE:

GREAT	
GOOD	4
O.K.	3
BLAH	2
BAD	1

READING RECORD

Title	Author	Value Line	Dates Pages-Pg/D	Comments
		1 2 3 4 5		
		1 2 3 4 5		
		1 2 3 4 5		
		1 2 3 4 5		
		1 2 3 4 5		
		1 2 3 4 5		
		1 2 3 4 5		
		1 2 3 4 5		
		1 2 3 4 5		

Total number of pages read: _____

Respond to your reading. What did you like and dislike? What was special about this group of books? _____

_____

_____

What do you plan for your reading for the next period? _____

_____

Teacher response: _____

Following the student's lead, this teacher changed the format to run horizontally across the page, listing only the date, book title, and rating. As the school year progressed, and as the children grew in their competence, the vertical format was re-introduced along with the addition of author's name. Note how the reader in the Student Record Form on page 10 made room for what most mattered to him—the book title and the book ratings. At six years old he was judicious with most of his ratings, but gave *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* a generous 25 (out of a 1-5 point scale)! Is there any doubt as to this young reader's favorite book?

The Reading Record on page 11 (developed by a fifth grade teacher) moves the reader toward some thoughtful reflection. At the conclusion of every ten books read independently, the reader is asked to respond: What did you like and dislike? What was special about this group of books? What do you plan for your reading for the next period? The bottom of the reading log also leaves room for a teacher response. In this fifth grade classroom, the teacher holds a conference with the reader after ten books are read. This 3-5 minute conference can be used to celebrate, to focus and set goals, to ponder reading patterns, whatever the teacher and reader see as worthy of discussion based on the information raised by the Reading Record and the reader.

To support students in their process of rating a book, some teachers keep a wall poster prominently displayed near classroom library shelves examining the question, "What Makes a Good Book Good?" This serves to prompt students in their growing critical analysis of the books they read and the ratings they apply to these books. The wall chart is always a work in progress as students read more widely in a variety of genres and express interest in expanding the chart to accommodate their broadening awareness.

To maintain student motivation in keeping Reading Records, some teachers have found more success using them for shorter periods of time—two to four weeks at the end of the year for young readers or one to two weeks prior to the end of each semester for older readers. Regardless of the time frame used, these records hold students accountable for their reading and develop an awareness of their progress (Routman, 1988).

Anecdotal Records

One of a teacher's most valuable assessment tools is the keep-

ing of informal anecdotal notes related to specific learners in the process of authentic learning events. Careful observations, or what researcher Yetta Goodman (1978) so appropriately termed "kid watching," can provide us with a sense of the learner's processes, rather than an overreliance on the learner's products. Both process and product pieces are invaluable tools to provide a big-picture view of the learner. Once they've determined what literacy behaviors to monitor, the frustration many teachers have with kid watching is making time to document. Those who've specified the focus of their observations, set up a workable system, and made time for record keeping find anecdotal records both feasible and invaluable.

If a teacher has as a goal for student readers the development of self-monitoring strategies as they read for meaning, a natural way to assess this is by listening to students read. While oral reading isn't a sure guarantee that a reader comprehends, including time to retell can offer a sense of this. Many teachers, at all grade levels, have determined that anecdotal notes serve to establish an ongoing record of a reader's strategies and comprehension. These teachers also agree that notations are easiest to capture during one-on-one time with a reader. To do this, it's important to set aside a twenty-to-thirty minute time block three to five days a week (often this occurs during SSR or during independent reading time). A student meets with the teacher for approximately five to ten minutes, bringing with them the book they'd like to read aloud. (If a teacher spends time with three students three times a week, she can keep individual notes on every reader in class once every three weeks—that's two annotated conferences per student every six weeks, 10-12 a year!) Young readers can usually read and retell an entire book during this time; older readers are asked to select a 100 word passage to read aloud. The teacher listens, makes note of one or two strategies the reader uses effectively, notes an area or two of struggle, and perhaps writes down an instructional tip they suggested to the reader. The key is not to write down everything... start by listing one reading strength, one area of demonstrated need, and one instructional suggestion.

Teachers who maintain a separate page of ongoing anecdotal notes for each child need waste no time moving post-it notes around or cutting and pasting notes taken randomly throughout the reading workshop. When all students have their own page of notes, prior to starting a reading conference they can (and should!) read and reflect on their own patterns, their growth, and the areas

they've set as goals. Some teachers keep anecdotal notes on conference sheets stapled to the inside of each student's reading workshop folders (see sample below). This way they're available to the student at all times. They also serve as an ongoing record to discuss with parents during conference times. Other teachers keep reading notes in a three-ring notebook, with separate sections for each student. Neither method is better. A teacher needs to select and fine-tune a note-taking procedure that is manageable and not so cumbersome that it's abandoned after the first few weeks of use.

Another means of taking individual reading notations is by maintaining a checklist along with anecdotal notes. One form, developed by elementary reading specialist Chris Walling (see sample on page 15), lists specific reading strategies and behaviors to listen

CONFERENCE SHEET

Name: _____

Date	Title/Author	Comments
9/27	Oh, Jump in a Sack	can point to the words in a l-r manner but can not sound out any letters at any time.
10/2		worked on identifying words that begin with letter 'T'. Also reviewed words that begin with 'M'.
10/4		Continue working on identifying words beginning with 'T' & M. Also predicting outcomes & recalling details of orally read story.
10/10		I.D. words beginning with 'P'.
11/1	'R'	Says 'r' instead of er for the sound of r. She did try to sound out words with me without getting discouraged! - D. Miller
11/8	Round & Round	She hurried through the book just saying the words she remembered but not pointing or reading.

12/6 Papa, Please get the Moon for Me

Paraphrasing book from memory. Knows l-r. tracks to point. Has good sense of story.

Name _____

Oral Reading Record

Sample of 100 words chosen by student.

On 1 page I know
Easy - all wds
Medium - wd
Challenge - wd

Word Attack: Clues used:

Oral Reading:

Comprehension:

Thinking:

Comments:

Initial Interview Questions:

1) What kinds of books do you like to read?
2) When you don't know a word, what do you do?
3) Do you understand what you read?
4) How can you tell when someone is a good reader?
What does a good reader do?
5) Where would you place yourself as a reader?
Slow Medium Good
6) Do you have any questions for me?

Date:	Title:	E	M	C	Picture	Decoding	Structural	Context	Self-corrects	Fluent	Main Idea	Recalls details	Finds proof to answer Q's	Formulates Q's about reading	Demonstrates metacognitive awareness:	

for and provides space for retelling and other information not listed on the chart but too important to miss.

Each of these recording methods offers teachers, students, and parents specific, learner-centered reading process information that profiles growth over time as well as making note of areas for instruction and more learning. When teachers start with their own jottings, gradually they'll develop a checklist that's most workable for their goals and purposes. As these checklists are developed some teachers find it valuable to borrow from and adapt the framework of others. A few resources for checklists are included at the end of this booklet.

The Learner as Informant

One of the most informative pieces of assessment comes directly from the learner. Whether in kindergarten, sixth grade, or high school, students know a great deal about learning and about what was, or wasn't learned. Too often schools have neglected to include the learner as a key participant in the assessment process. This section offers numerous ways to invite the learner into the process as a means of informing the other stakeholders. In these pieces students might reveal self-perceptions, beliefs, and goals. In all cases, these self-reflections should be natural outgrowths of ongoing classroom engagements with reading and writing.

Literature Circles Self-Evaluations

Lisa Norwick's sixth graders have recently finished their first literature circle experience. One culminating event was the development of an extension project. These projects were completed individually, in pairs, triads, or in literature circle teams and were then presented to the class, parents, and other visitors. Following the presentations, Lisa asked her students to respond to the following:

1. What does your extension do to help people understand and appreciate the literary aspects of the book? Please give specific examples from your extension project.
2. Does your extension project show your best effort and time well spent? Explain.

One of Lisa's goals for her first round of literature circles was that students "gain appreciation for development of the literary

elements of setting, character, plot, and theme. This self-evaluation returned that focus to the students. Their responses gave her some insight into how they understood literary elements and how effectively they portrayed some of these elements in their own work.

Lisa also asked her students to complete a self-evaluation form with a checklist and a space for a listing of future goals (see the sample on page 18). This form clearly lists the participatory events of literature circles as well as providing a focus on behaviors used when students read independently and in community with others. This self-evaluation form was introduced and demonstrated during a mini-lesson and then students were given adequate time to complete it. Every self-evaluation was returned with thoughtful responses. In classrooms where students are involved with assessment at all stages it shouldn't be surprising that, when asked, students really do know how they're progressing and what goals are most manageable and meaningful for them.

Self-Reflections

While not all learners are as articulate as these sixth graders, that shouldn't stop teachers from inviting students to self-reflect. Kindergarten teacher Lavon Rosendahl interviewed her students prior to parent conferences by asking the children to look at their writing folders and compare writing done in September with writing done in January. She prompted their reflections with: What do you notice about your writing? How has your writing changed since September? What's hard/easy about writing? Which piece is your best and why? She took the time to sit with each young writer and served as a scribe to capture their responses.

> Bethany: "We didn't write then. Now I put spaces so you know if it is a word that connects together. Now I can write words. What things are easy or hard when you write? That's a hard question."
>
> Caleb: "I started writing better and writing what they sounded like. I can write words better and I can write faster. I can read better. You have to write the sounds. Trying to write a long word that I haven't heard before is hard. Short words are easy. My best page is because I like football."
>
> Allison: "My writing is better now. Now I can write S's. S's are hard. A's are easy, and I's and N's. The last page is my best page because I just did it yesterday."

SELF-EVALUATION FORM

Name _____

Date Oct. 21 1992

Please use this checklist to help you self-evaluate your part in your literature circle.

	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	NOT YET
As I read the story, I make sure it makes sense to me.	✓		
I prepare for discussion by: reading the pages the group agrees on	✓		
thinking about what I want to share or ask about.	✓		
I keep the discussion going by: contributing appropriate information and opinions	✓		
using active listening when others talk	✓		
encouraging other group members.	✓		
I look for connections between the story and things that have happened to me.		✓	
I look for connections between the story and other literature I've read.		✓	
My journal entries reflect my personal response and understanding of the novel I read.	✓		
My journal entries show effort and time well spent.	✓		

Super

Future goal(s): I want to think more about connections between the things that have happened to me and the characters their story and other books.

The responses demonstrate how important it is to gain a sense of children's perceptions as well as the need to guide children in ways of looking at products with an evaluative eye.

Luanne Bressler asked her kindergarten learners to draw and write a note to their parents for conference time showing what they know and can do. The responses illustrated on page 20 tell us what these youngsters deem important learning for a kindergartner.

Borrowing from an idea presented in *Evaluating Literacy: A Perspective for Change* (Anthony et al., 1991) fourth grade teacher Penny Redman developed a full-page listing of four areas of focus for her students as they prepared self-reflections for use in parent conferences. The first three statements were completed by the student; the last statement was completed by the parent at the end of the conference:

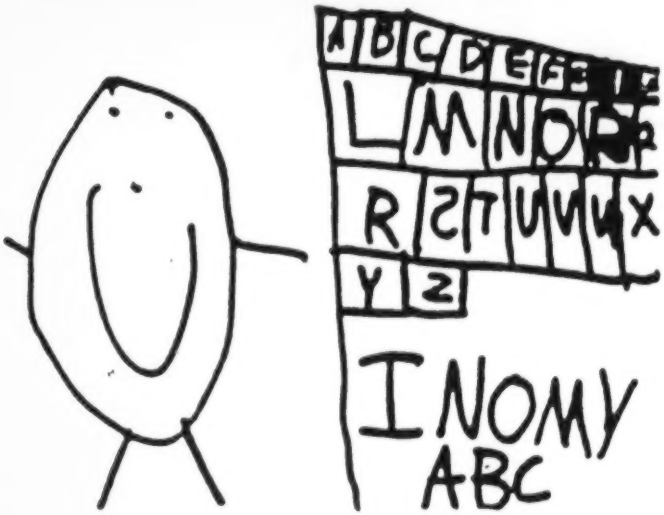
- While you look at my work, please notice these things about it:
- These are the things I can do well:
- These are the things I need to improve:
- Please make a positive comment to me:

In preparation for this year's first round of parent conferences, Lisa Norwick's sixth graders completed a self-reflection (see the figure on page 21) that became the initial focus of their student-led, parent-teacher-student conference. This self-reflection served as the springboard for discussion, for sharing samples from writing folders and reading workshop logs, and for focusing on the aspects of learning each student wanted their parent to understand.

If evaluation and assessment are to be most effective, they need to involve all primary stakeholders. The preceding examples are only a few ways children and teachers invite parents to share in celebrating their child's success, and success is most certainly the best springboard for further motivation to learn.

Report Cards

Another example of adapting a valuable idea and making it fit your goals and your students is the Report Card Project. Inspired by a student-developed Teacher Report Card in *Invitations: Changing as Teachers and Learners K-12* (Routman, 1991), Louise Beard designed a project for her third graders prior to their quarterly reporting period. This project requires students to decide what areas



Thinking about reading and writing stories.
Jenna Forgey

Name _____

Self Reflection

Please share some of your interests.

I enjoy playing sports, watching movies, and E.T. going on trips (Chelan), and spending time with my friends and family.

What do you do well in school?

I do well in math, reading, and P.E. P.E. is my favorite.

What are three accomplishments you are proud of?

I am proud of getting one hundred percent on all of my spelling test. I'm also proud of doing I Me pull-ups than last year and I'm proud of my writing this year, too.

What do you want people to notice most about you?

I want people to notice that I'm a hard worker and that I know a lot. I also want people to notice that I'm nice.

or subjects to evaluate. Then they develop a 3-point rating scale and decide how they're doing in each area. Students design and make their own report cards (see the samples on pages 23 and 24) producing an array of what they consider important, how well they believe they've worked, and even how much the teacher likes them. These report cards are certainly a reflection of each student's personality and ability, as well as what they are thinking!

If we desire an assessment and evaluation process that serves learners and their needs, it is mandatory that we involve learners in the heart of the process (Routman, 1991). Student responsibility for learning leads to independence—a goal most would embrace. To meet this goal, classroom-based assessment must invite student participation and support student self-reflection and self-evaluation with demonstrations of how, when, and why. It is not enough to ask students to self-evaluate or to expect students to know how to do something adults have done for them—and to them—most of their lives. We must share with our students the process of goal setting, of focusing on what is meant by effective and strategic reading and writing, and of ways to assess and evaluate, realizing that self-evaluation is as much a process as any new learning.

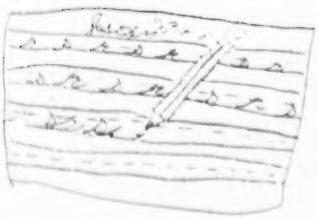
Inviting and Involving Parents

In an effective assessment program, parents serve as partners with teachers and are seen as rich sources of information (Anthony, Johnson, Mickelson, Preece, 1991). In addition to student-prepared focus sheets for parent conferences (as noted on previous pages), there are other ways to invite parents to share in the assessment process. At the beginning of the school year, Penny Redman (4th grade) sends a letter home to the parent(s) of each student in her classroom. In the letter she asks:

Please take a few moments to share some of your knowledge of your child. What do you see as his/her strengths? Weaknesses? What are your child's interests? What are the things you, as a parent, know that would be important for me to know? What is your wish/hope/ dream for you child during this school year?

Many parents labor over this response, caring about their child's welfare and trusting that a teacher who asks about it does too. This letter can serve as a focus for conferences and progress

Justin's
Most excellent Report card



	R	G	B
Math		✓	
Reading	✓		
Writing		✓	
Science		✓	
French	✓		✓
Spelling		✓	
P.E.		✓	
Art		/	✓
Music			✓
Computers		✓	
Behavior		✓	
Listens well			✓
Cooperates		✓	
Plays well		✓	
attitude		✓	
Completes tasks	✓		

R = Righteous G = Nearly O = Bogus

Justins comments
Does ok in every subject and not so Wel in others

teachers comment

Name Athena

Reading in Literature Circles	2
Cursive	2
Spelling	2
O DEAR	2
Science	2
Working by yourself	1
Working in a group	2
How I act	1
Math	2
art	1
P.E.	1
Lunch	1
Recess	1
French	1

1 Very good all the time.
2 good most of the time
3 never good

Teacher comments

In some things Athena is good all of the time
Some things she need to work a little harder
But most of the time she is very good
She works very hard in class and Im glad
that she is in my class.

reports, demonstrating to parents that their hopes and dreams for their sons and daughters are shared by teachers as well.

Many teachers set lifelong reading and writing as a goal for their students. This, however, is not easy to measure using traditional school-based assessment tools. Teachers desiring this information have to seek input from parents who see (or don't see) reading and writing products and practices occurring outside the school day. One way to obtain information about out-of-school reading and writing is to request it. This can be done through a form such as the one below:

Child's name _____

Date written by parent _____

Parents: I'd like some input from you about your child's reading/writing activities at home. It will be included in your child's portfolio with your permission.

At home I see my child's interest and enjoyment as a reader when he/she _____

At home I see my child's interest and enjoyment as a writer when he/she _____

Grand Celebrations

In some schools and districts classroom teachers don't stand alone in the development and implementation of assessments that showcase a learner's growth over time. An example is what I've termed the "Grand Celebration." One place where this occurs is Sherwood, Oregon. Committed to writing development, Sherwood has every student K-12 select one piece of writing per year to be copied and placed in a permanent writing folder. On the day twelfth graders rehearse for graduation, they walk across the stage and, rather than receive their diploma, they receive their cumulative writing folder. Students who spend all thirteen years in the district will collect a folder holding thirteen pieces. Those transferring into the district during ninth grade receive a folder with four pieces (and feel a secret envy for those with pieces from kindergarten on!). It's hard to imagine a better barometer of growth over time than writing folders with students' own writing at thirteen stages of their lives. What a fine school district-based tradition for celebrating growth!

"What Next?" Thinking About Classroom-based Assessment

Focusing on assessment at the classroom level offers many insights into our learners and our programs for learning. The examples given here are only some of the ways teachers are conducting literacy assessment in their own classrooms. It is hoped that these examples will result in continued conversation and the sharing of additional practical suggestions for organizing assessment in the classroom. In our conversations it would be wise to consider other areas related to assessment, some of which are listed in the paragraphs that follow.

Often the best support for classroom-based assessment comes from the ongoing opportunities teachers create within the classroom that lead to informal assessment—author's chair and time to talk about reading and writing; mini-lessons and focused discussions about what makes an effective piece of writing, student maintenance of writing folders and time set aside to select and save significant pieces. Most important is taking time to share the assessment process alongside students and allowing space between assessment (collection of data) and evaluation (judgments about what the data shows in relation to standards operating in the classroom). In this way, there's time for growth to be noticeable.

Classroom-based assessment offers us a chance to focus on the goals we set for learning and the learners with whom we work. Along with the grand idea behind such practice is the reality of each of our situations, our differences in knowledge base, and our comfort (and discomfort) as we move toward assessment processes and practices that differ from those traditionally used. There are numerous print resources to support teachers in their own growth with assessment and evaluation (see resource lists at the end of this booklet). There are also many colleagues in classrooms next door, in district offices, on university campuses, and at conferences and conventions who are at all stages of the process. (A list of some with whom I've worked is provided at the end of this booklet.) Colleagues can serve as key resources and support. I recommend we turn to people and print as guides while taking our own steps into classroom-based assessment. There is much to learn...and to celebrate!

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Additional Resources

The following is not the most comprehensive listing of resources available. It is, however, a list that includes books and documents most influential in my own growth as I've gained a better perspective on theory, research, and practice. Undoubtedly you could recommend some resources that don't appear on this list. I hope this will prompt some "But, haven't you read...?" discussions and perhaps even the development of an annotated bibliography or a compilation of assessment/evaluation resource reviews written by teachers for teachers. You'll know what serves you best—the challenge is to locate it, adapt it, and share it!

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Tierney, R., Carter, M., & Desai, L. (1991). *Portfolio assessment in the reading-writing classroom*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Resources for Checklists

Clemmons, J., Laase, L., Cooper, D., & Areglado, N. (1993). *Portfolios in the classroom: A teacher's sourcebook*. New York: Scholastic.

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